

Ways to Vote

The State of California and the City of Long Beach provide two methods of casting your ballot. You may use a traditional polling place on the date of the election, or you may cast your ballot in the Vote-by-Mail process. Each method is a valid way to exercise your voting franchise.

Casting your ballot at a polling place is as old as our country. Poll workers are on hand to assist you in understanding the proper procedure for marking the ballot, assist those with disabilities of any nature, and provide language assistance if needed.

Vote-by-Mail has been available to all voters for several years. Eligible voters may request a vote-by-mail ballot approximately a month prior to the election and vote that ballot from the privacy of their home. A new option in recent years is the ability to declare yourself a permanent absentee voter. Each election a ballot will automatically be sent to your residence or mailing address without requesting it.

Detailed information on ways to vote follows below in a series of questions and answers. Remember! It does not matter how you vote, just vote.

Where do I go to vote/where is my polling place?

Your polling place location is printed on the back cover of your sample ballot booklet. Please check the polling place address for each election because locations often change. Also, poll locations are available at www.LAVOTE.net or by calling (562) 570-6101.

What are the poll hours of operation?

Polling places are open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Why was my polling place changed?

In California, there are no permanent polling sites. Locations may change from election to election if a facility previously used is not available for a particular election. Changes to precinct boundaries may sometimes occur when precincts are consolidated or realigned, especially for local elections that are not statewide. Voters should refer to their sample ballot pamphlet to make sure that they go to the correct polling place location.

What do I do if my polling place is not open when I arrive election morning?

Check the address on the back cover of your sample ballot pamphlet to make sure you have gone to the right location. Polling places often change between elections. If you are at the correct location, call the City Clerk Department at (562) 570-6101 to report that the polling place is not open.

Can I take my sample ballot or my own written voting choices into the voting booth?

Yes. It is recommended that you mark your voting choices in your sample ballot and take it to your poll location on Election Day to use as a reference. This will allow you to vote your ballot quickly. Remember to take your sample ballot out of the voting booth after you have completed voting.

If I do not know what to do when I get to the polling place, will someone help me?

Yes. Ask the election poll workers to help you with the voting process. Poll workers are forbidden to help you in making decisions on your voting choices.

Can I vote for someone whose name is not listed on the ballot?

Yes if the person is a qualified write-in candidate. Only votes for qualified write-in candidates will be counted. Ask election poll workers or call the City Clerk Department for a list of those candidates. The poll worker or City Clerk Department staff can assist you with write-in voting procedures.

Who may vote by mail?

Any registered voter may apply to vote-by-mail.

How Can I vote a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot?

Voting by mail is the same as voting by absentee ballot. Rather than going to the polling place to cast a ballot on Election Day, you may request a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot. Any registered voter may apply for a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot. Applying is easy. Simply select one of the following options:

- By Mail: 1) Complete the vote-by-mail/absentee ballot application that is on the back cover of the sample ballot pamphlet (sent to you prior to each election) and mail to the City Clerk Department.
- By Mail: 2) Send a signed letter requesting a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot to the Long Beach City Clerk Department, 333 W. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90802.
- By Fax: The completed application or signed letter may also be faxed to the City Clerk Department at (562) 570-6789. If you apply in writing or by fax, your request must include your name, your residence/home address, the mailing address where you want your absentee ballot to be sent and the name and the date of the election for which you are applying. Remember to sign and date your request!
- By Internet: Download and complete a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot application and fax back to the City Clerk Department at (562) 570-6789. Further information can be obtained by calling the City Clerk Department Absent Voter Section at (562) 570-6101.

When can I apply for a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot?

- 30 days prior to the election (March 11, 2002) is the first day to submit vote-by-mail/absentee ballot requests. You may apply sooner than 30 days prior; however

ballots are mailed to applicants beginning on the first legal day to mail, which is 29 days prior to an election.

- The final day to apply for a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot is 7 days prior to an election.
- If you become ill, disabled, or find that you will be away from your polling place during the final 6 days prior to an election, you may vote an emergency absentee ballot. You can vote in person at the City Clerk Department or send in a written/signed request for an absentee ballot authorizing another person to bring the ballot to you and return it to the elections office or any polling place after you have voted.

When is the last day to return my voted vote-by-mail/absentee ballot?

The elections official must receive vote-by-mail/absentee ballots no later than the close of polls (8 p.m.) on Election Day. Postmarks do not count!

How do I turn in my vote-by-mail/absentee ballot on Election Day?

You may return it in person to any polling place in the City by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. If, because of illness or physical disability, you are unable to return the ballot yourself, you may authorize, in writing, a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother or sister to return the ballot to the Elections Office or to any polling place within the city by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Are there circumstances under which a voter can be required to vote a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot?

Yes. If an election precinct has 250 or less registered voters on the 88th day prior to an election, that precinct can be declared a “vote-by-mail ballot precinct” by the elections official due to the unavailability of voting locations and poll workers in small precincts. All voters in such designated precincts will automatically be sent vote-by-mail ballots for that election.

Do I have to apply for a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot for each election?

No. You may apply as a “Permanent Absentee Voter.” Once on file as a permanent absentee voter, you will no longer have to apply for future elections. A ballot will automatically be mailed to you for each election. Once a voter is approved for Permanent Absentee Voter status, he/she will retain this status as long as he/she casts a ballot in all statewide elections. For additional information on becoming a Permanent Absentee Voter, please refer to your sample ballot pamphlet or call the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk Absent Voting Section at (562) 466-1323.

If I request a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot, can I change my mind and still vote at my polling place?

Yes, but please take your vote-by-mail/absentee ballot to the polling place and surrender it to the poll workers before voting a regular precinct ballot. If you do not have your vote-by-mail/absentee ballot to surrender, you will be allowed to cast a “provisional” ballot at the polling place. Your provisional ballot will be counted after the

elections official confirms that you did not previously vote using a vote-by-mail/absentee ballot for that election.

I received a vote-by-mail/absentee application from a political campaign. Is this legal to use?

Yes. Individuals, organizations and groups may distribute vote-by-mail/absentee ballot applications; however they must use the standard format as specified in the California Elections Code.